

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8482

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: BIO INFORMATION ON HAHM PYONG-CHOON

REF: STATE 244960

1. DR. HAHM PYONG-CHOON, SELECTED TO REPLACE KIM DONG-JO AS ROK AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, IS AN AMERICAN-EDUCATED ACADEMICIAN WHO HAS SERVED FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS AS PRESIDENT PARK'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS. HIS ACCESS TO THE INNER ROKG POLICY-MAKING CIRCLE AND HIS PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER INDICATE THAT THE ROKG HOPES HIS APPOINTMENT WILL MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND SEOUL.

2. BORN FEBRUARY 26, 1932 IN SEOUL, DR. HAHM ATTENDED NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY, GRADUATING IN 1956. HE RECEIVED A DOCTORATE IN LAW FROM HARVARD IN 1959 AND BECAME IN THAT YEAR A PROFESSOR AT THE COLLEGE OF LAW AND POLITICAL SCIENCE OF YONSEI UNIVERSITY IN SEOUL, A POSITION HE HELD THROUGH 1960 WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 1966-68, WHEN HE WAS DOING RESEARCH AT YALE. IN DECEMBER 1970 HE WAS APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, ONE OF NINE SPECIAL ADVISORS NAMED AT THAT TIME. DR. HAHM IS AUTHOR OF THE BOOK "KOREAN POLITICAL TRADITION AND LAW," AND IS A CONTRIBUTOR TO PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

3. DURING HIS TENURE AT BLUE HOUSE ONE OF DR. HAHM'S PRINCIPAL
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TASKS HAS BEEN TO ACT AS KOREA'S INFORMAL AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE TO

THE INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY. HE HAS TRAVELLED REGULARLY ATTENDING CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD, AND IN SETTING FORTH THE KOREAN POSITION HE HAS DEFENDED KOREAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES. DURING THIS PERIOD THE PARK REGIME BECAME PROGRESSIVELY MORE REPRESSIVE AND HAHM'S ADVOCACY WAS RESENTED BY SOME AS AN APOLOGY FOR THE LESS SAVORY ASPECTS OF KOREAN STYLE DEMOCRACY. HE WAS PERHAPS JUDGED MORE HARSHLY THAN OTHER KOREAN GOVERNMENT FIGURES ARGUING THE SAME CASE BECAUSE OF HIS ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS AND HIGHLY WESTERNIZED BACKGROUND, ONE TENDS TO EXPECT MORE OF A HARVARD MAN. HAHM, HOWEVER, IS A KOREAN, A GOVERNMENT SERVANT, AND A LAWYER, AND PROBABLY WOULD ARGUE THAT HIS JOB WAS TO PRESENT HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION, NOT TO EXPRESS HIS PERSONAL SENTIMENTS.

4. HIS OTHER IMPORTANT FUNCTION WAS TO BE THE INTELLECTUAL GADFLY, AND TO WORK WITH FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CHOI KYU-HAH IN DEVELOPING KOREAN FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS. HAHM UNDOUBTEDLY DESERVES SOME OF THE CREDIT FOR THE FLEXIBILITY AND INITIATIVES SHOWN BY THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT IN THIS FIELD OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS.

5. IN WASHINGTON DR. HAHM IS LIKELY TO BUILD ON HIS ESTABLISHED ASSOCIATIONS IN THE AMERICAN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND TO WORK TO IMPROVE THE ROK IMAGE WITH KEY SEGMENTS OF THE U.S. MEDIA, THE CONGRESS, AND THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD. HAHM IS INTELLIGENT, ARTICULATE, AND AT EASE WITH AMERICANS. HIS ENGLISH IS FLUENT, IDIOMATIC, AND VIRTUALLY WITHOUT ACCENT, AND HE HANDLES HIMSELF WITH POISE AND ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC DISCUSSION. THERE ARE OCCASIONAL FLASHES OF INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE, BUT GENERALLY HE IS URBANE AND CHARMING. HE DOES NOT DRINK ALCOHOL IN ANY FORM, AND ONE OF HIS ACADEMIC COLLEAGUES HAS REMARKED THAT HE IS THE FIRST KOREAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. WHO NEITHER DRINKS, SMOKES, OR PLAYS GOLF.

6. MRS. HAHM WAS BORN NOV. 29, 1927. SHE IS A GRADUATE OF EWHA UNIVERSITY, WHERE SHE IS PRESENTLY A PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY. MRS. HAHM ATTENDED NATIONAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION IN EVANSTON, ILLINOIS, AND BOSTON MUSEUM SCHOOL. HER COMMAND OF ENGLISH IS ALMOST ON A LEVEL WITH HER HUSBAND'S. SHE WILL PROBABLY SEEK TO AVOID AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THE WASHINGTON SOCIAL WHIRL, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT WILL PROBABLY BE ACTIVE IN HER AREAS OF PROFESSIONAL INTEREST. THE HAHMS HAVE TWO SONS, AGE 15 AND 10. PHOTOS REQUESTED IN REFTEL ARE BEING POUCHED. UNDERHILL

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